

# THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival  
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

Saturday MAY 5. 1744. § N<sup>o</sup>. 62.

*The Remainder of Mr. Wilfon.*

**B**ISHOP DAVENANT says, \* \* We hold that all the  
Faithful have a *supernatural Light* which the HOLY  
SPIRIT infuses into their Minds by the Ministration  
of the Word: *In which Light* they judge, and  
by the Eyes of the Mind perceive those Doctrines, to  
which they assent by an Act of common Faith, to be divine.  
It is an acknowledged Truth, that every Thing is received  
according to the *Capacity* and *Fitness* of the *Recipient*. To a  
right understanding of any Thing, there is required a *suita-  
bleness* between the *Faculty* and the *Object*. The Eye cannot  
perceive Smells, nor the Ear hear Colours. Nor can any  
sensitive Power reach to the Apprehension of Things purely  
intellectual: so neither can the Mind of a mere natural Man  
that is darken'd and depraved by Sin, (while it so remains)  
duly apprehend Matters spiritual and heavenly. It is the Ob-  
servation of a late Author, † That the best and most effectual  
Remedy for the thorow curing of our intellectual Diseases, is that  
which alters the *Crafs* and *Disposition* of the *Mind*; because (as  
he very well argues) 'tis *suitableness* to that, which makes the  
way to *Mens* Judgments, and settles them in their *Perswasion*:  
there being few (as he further adds) that hold their Opinions by  
*Arguments* and dry Reasonings; but by *Congruity* to the Under-  
standing, and consequently by *Relish* in the Affections. Now as

- \* *Dicimus habere singulos fideles supernaturale lumen, quod per verbi ministerium SPIRITUS illorum mentibus infundit, in quo lumine ipsi judicant, & propriae mentis oculis percipiunt dogmata illa, quibus assentiuntur actu Fidei Catholicae, esse divina.* Davenantius de *Judice & aeterna* Controv. Cap. 30. † Mr. Glanville in his *Philos. Pio*, p 45.

found Philosophy doth (according to the aforefaid Author) go far for the Cure of Men's Mistakes, by giving their Minds another Tincture; to wit, in such Things as lie within the Sphere of Nature; so where this comes short, (as in Things of supernatural Revelation it certainly doth) there is Need of supernatural Aid. This Mr. Baxter hath very well express'd; || *I think*, says he, *that in the very hearing or reading, God's SPIRIT often so concurreth, as that the Will it self shall be touched with an internal Gust or Savour of the Goodness contain'd in the Doctrine, and at the same Time the Understanding with an internal Irradiation, which breeds such a sudden Apprehension of the Verity of it, as Nature gives Men of natural Principles. And I am persuaded that this increased by more Experience and Love and inward Gusts, doth hold most Christians faster to CHRIST than naked Reasoning could do: And were it not for this, unlearned, ignorant Persons were still in Danger of Apostasy by every subtle Caviller that assaults them. And I believe that all true Christians have this Kind of internal Knowledge from the Suitableness of the Truth and Goodness of the Gospel to their newly quickened illuminated sanctified Souls.* Bishop Davenant also says, † That the Way of knowing in Doctrines of Faith, is by Inspiration, by the witnessing of the HOLY SPIRIT, and by the way of Relishing; as Halensis most truly teaches. The Apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 4.6. *GOD who commanded the Light to shine out of Darknes, hath shined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of GOD in the Face of JESUS CHRIST.* Where he manifestly compares the great Work of GOD in enlightening the dark Heart of Man with spiritual Knowledge, to the first forming of Light, which was the Act of a creating Power, when Darknes covered the Face of the Deep, Gen. 1. 2, 3. Let the greatest external or objective Light be afforded, if there be not likewise, in order to the Reception of that, a subjective Light infused, it will prove, as we find in Joh. 1. 5. *The Light shineth in Darknes, and the Darknes comprehended it not.*

## S E C T. VI.

He says, " That this supernatural Light is a Thing unintelligible, he knows not what to make of it, nor how to conceive of it; Is it (says he) something ordinary, or is it extraordinary? To

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† *Modus Sciendi in dogmatibus fidei est per Inspirationem, per Testimonium Spiritus, & per modum Gustus; ut verissime Halensis, Part. 1. q. 1. art. 2. Sic Daven de Judice et norma controver. c. 30. || On Lord Herbert de Veritate.*

To his Demand I answer ; 1. It is beyond the Reach of corrupted and *depraved Nature*, and so it is *extraordinary* : but it is the inseparable Privilege of *renew'd Nature*, and so far it is *ordinary* ; for it is communicated to all who partake in the saving Grace of CHRIST.

But, 2. Whereas this Author says, He knows not what this enlightening of the Spirit is ; I easily believe him, considering what our Saviour says of the Spirit of Truth, which he promised to his Disciples ; *That the World could not receive him, because it seeth him not, neither receiveth him*, Joh. 14. 17. And it is no Wonder for Men to speak slightly or contemptuously of the Things they know not : Upon which very Account many excellent Truths plainly revealed in the Gospel, are, by audacious Wits, exploded and derided as unintelligible Mysteries.

Yet, 3. Methinks Men's Reason might tell them, (if it were not wofully blinded by Pride, Prejudice, or Passion) that the Unaccountableness of the Nature of a Thing, or of the Manner how it is, can be no sufficient Argument against its Existence. The most perspicacious Inquirers into the Secrets of Nature, do acknowledge themselves convinced of the certain Existence of many Things, the Nature whereof, and the Manner of their Production, they are not able to conceive, much less to discover. *Thou knowest not* (says Solomon, Eccles. 11. 5.) *what is the Way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child.* It is beyond the Ken of Man's understanding infallibly to know, or demonstratively to prove, 1. The Way of the Spirit or Soul, whether it be produced by Creation, or Traduction, or what other Way : And, 2. How the Body is form'd in the Womb. I know some learned Men have gone far in their Discoveries, but the ablest of them have been put to a stop, meeting with some Knots which they could not untie. I might ask these *curious Questioners*, How they can solve the many Doubts that may be raised about the *Species* of sensible Objects, and about the *Phantasms* in the Mind ; or give us a satisfying Account, whence they come, how they are framed, and where it is that they are first received ? Or, I might demand of them, Which Way the *Soul & Body* are united to each other, and how they come to act one upon another ; with a thousand more Difficulties that occur, where the *αἴτιον* is unsearchable, tho' the *ὄν* be undeniable. How much more may this be affirm'd

of Things purely revealed, the Sublimity whereof so vastly exceeds the former?

# S E C T. VII.

Secondly, Another Thing these Men dislike is, That the SPIRIT's enlightening of the Mind is said to be *immediate*.

1. Now if the Word *immediate* be taken as it is sometimes explain'd, for such as *superceeds* Man's Use of God's appointed Means, as if he were to expect some internal Voice or Impulse to reveal to him the Mind of God; we disclaim all *immediate* Actings of the SPIRIT in this Sense. But if *immediate* be taken (as it may very properly) for such an Operation of the HOLY SPIRIT as doth *Immediate attingere mentem*; That is, by it self, without the Interposition of any second Cause, reacheth the Mind of Man; so we maintain, that there is no effectual Operation of the SPIRIT of God upon the Soul of Man, but what is in this Sense *immediate*. For what created Agent is there to come between the SPIRIT of God and the Soul of Man? Or that can by its own Efficiency come at the Soul of Man to work upon it? This nothing can do but an *infinite Spirit*. If any will say, That there is something else comes between the Spirit of God and the Soul of Man, in this Business, let them assign what it is. Is it the *Scripture* it self? That can act but *objectively*; nor can it do that, further than it is *understood* and *believed*. That therefore which works upon the Mind by a proper Efficiency to redress the Indisposition of the Faculty, and to enable it to know and believe, must be something else; and that can be no less than *the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*, which the Apostle prays for in Behalf of his *Ephesians*, Eph. 1.

2. I further add this, that an *immediate* Work of the Spirit is defensible also in another Sense, *viz.* As it is opposed to a *Necessity* of outward Means on the Spirit's Part. For as it is in the outward and visible Administrations of Providence; God hath tied us to the Use of Means for our own Preservation and Subsistence; yet he hath not tied up himself to Means, so but that he can, and sometimes doth, step out of his *ordinary* Way, and work for us more *immediately*, where Means are wanting, or whensoever he thinks fit to act without them: So may it be said in this Case, (the invisible Dispensations of Grace) it is our Duty to use the Means afforded us for our Information in the Things of God; and it were bold Presumption for any Man to expect the Spirit's Help in the  
Neglect

Neglect of those Means. But GOD hath no where told us, that I know, that he hath bound up himself from communicating his Light and Grace in a Way extraordinary without Means, either where the Means are denied, or whensoever he is pleased to waive their Use.

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Upon the deplorable Loss of the Rev. Mr. Peter Thacher, Pastor of the first Church in Middleborough; 'tis hoped the following Memorial of him drawn up by the Rev. Mr. Prince will be acceptable to our Readers, as we are sure it will to the Pious who knew him.

THIS reverend and dear Minister of CHRIST was happily derived of eminently pious and venerable Ancestors. He was a younger Son of the Rev. Mr. Peter Thacher, the first Pastor of the Church in Milton by his first Wife Theodora Daughter of the Rev. Mr. John Oxenbridge, Pastor of the first gather'd Church in Boston. And the said Mr. Thacher of Milton was a Son of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Thacher, the first Pastor of the third or South Church in Boston, by his first Wife Daughter of the Rev. Mr. Ralph Partridge, first Pastor of the Church in Duxbury: who was one of the Committee of the Synod of the four united Colonies in New-England, met at Cambridge in 1648, for the composing of our excellent Platform of Church Discipline. And the said Thomas was a Son of the Rev. Mr. Peter Thacher a Puritan Minister of the City of Salisbury in England: for whom that most pious and learned Dr. Reynolds the renowned Professor of Divinity in Oxford had such a Respect as to make him one of his Legatees, giving him Part of his Library in his last Will and Testament; as I have seen commemorated in the said Legatee's Hand-writing in the said Rainold's famous Latin Lectures on the Apochrypha, which were Part of the Legacy.

The said Mr. Thacher of Middleborough was born at Milton about October 6, and baptized on Lord's-Day the 7th 1688. While young, his Father sent him to live with and study under the venerable and learned Mr. Hubbard of Newton: By whom he was fitted for College, and into which he enter'd at the Commencement in the Beginning of July 1702. And as Providence sent me to College on the next Commencement after, and placed me in a Chamber over him; he soon took  
Notice



Notice of me and enter'd into a special Acquaintance with me : So that I have been acquainted with him above 40 Years.

I then observed a religious Disposition in him : and saw more thereof, upon his taking me with him Home in one of the short *Election-Vacancies* in May 1705 or 1706 ; when I also had the Pleasure of seeing and hearing that agreeable and heavenly Man his *Father*, who receiv'd & entertain'd me with the most condescending Freedom and most hearty Welcome.

On *Wednesday July 3.* He took his first Degree of B. A. and then I think kept the Grammar-School at *Dorchester* : But seriously applied himself to prepare for the Ministry, to which he was wholly inclined and devoted. In the Beginning of *September 1707*, he was first sent to *Middleborough* and began to preach, to such great Acceptance, that on *June 30. 1708*, the Church there chose him their Pastor, before he was 20 Years of Age : And on *November 2. 1709*, he was ordained there to the Office.

*April 1. 1709*, I set Sail from *Boston-Harbour*, and returned not till *July 20, 1717.* But *Jan. 25. 1710, -11.* he married *Mary* a Daughter of *Samuel Prince Esq;* and *Mercy* his Wife, formerly of *Sandwich*, then of *Rochester* ; and by her had six Sons and four Daughters, all but the last, a Daughter, surviving him. And when I return'd to *New-England*, and went up to *Middleborough*, I was most agreeably entertained not only with his affectionate Embraces, but also with his great Improvement in Solidity and Judgment and a useful Conversation.

From his learned and pious Ancestors, he had, I think the best and largest Collection of *Puritan Authors* that I have met with in *New-England.* And as he was animated with the same Principles and Spirit as much as any Man I have known, he delighted in them, he had no such Relish for others, and he continually breath'd them in his Prayers, Preaching and Conversation.

Being also trained up in Families of Piety and Learning, where there had been a great Resort of the most eminent Ministers, he had collected many entertaining Histories and Observations which he had always ready at Hand, either for agreeable and innocent Diversion or a serious Use, as Occasion offer'd. In proper Seasons he could unbend his Mind and divert his Friends : But his habitual and prevailing Temper was great *Serioufness* and *Solemnity* : And the older he grew, the more

more he grew in *Sanctity*, and the more habitual and strong this *Solemnity* appeared in his *Countenance*, *Converse* & *Behaviour*.

My *Father* and *Mother* living in *Rochester* the next Town beyond him, when I return'd to this Country, and in their far advanced Age removing and dwelling in a Part of his House until they deceased, occasioned my journeying thither *twice a Year*: So that I judge I have visited him above *fifty Times*: And as his House was eminently a *Bethel*, or *House of God*; so every Time I went, it seem'd to me as if he grew in *Piety*, and spread a greater *Veneration* round him.

He ruled his *Family* with great and steady Authority, so that all therein both deeply fear'd and dearly lov'd him. When he spake of *religious Matters* it was with great *Seriousness*: When he came to any *religious Exercise*, tho' it was only *craving a Blessing* or *returning Thanks* at Table, his *Solemnity* arose to as high a Degree as I ever saw. In his *Graces at Table*, as well as *Family Prayers*, there was always a Variety and Suitableness to present Occasions of Things and Persons. Free from all Affectation and formal or customary Expressions, his Sentiments and Words appear'd intirely to rise from the serious Consideration of present Circumstances, and the Disposition of his Heart respecting them. He usually sang with all his Might, and made all his Household sing with him *Morning and Evening* at Family Prayers: And to the *Reading of the Scriptures* he sometimes added such *Expositions* and *Observations*, so natural, judicious, plain, accurate and useful, as I have been much entertained and surprized. As he walked or sat in his House, by his Aspect as well as Speech it seem'd as if he had been in the Mount with God; as if God was still in his Heart and Meditation. And he was eminently strict in keeping the *Sabbath* holy.

He was extraordinary *hospitable*, even beyond his Ability; so as thereby much to hurt his temporal Estate.

He was not forward to talk in Company: and when he spake, loved not to abound in Words; but delivered himself in pithy Sentences of Weight and Moment, avoided trifling and superfluous Words: both in *Conversing*, *Writing*, *Praying* and *Preaching* was eminent in comprehending as much real Sense in as few Words as possible. And I rarely heard him speak while another was speaking.

He had a lively Sense of the great Privilege of deriving from godly Ancestors, on the Account of their Covenant-Relation,

tion, Interest, Prayers, Instructions, Restraints, Examples ; and of the *great and singular Obligations* therewith descending on their Offspring, to love, chuse and adhere to *the God of their Fathers*, and to be pious like them. And this he frequently inculcated both on his Family in private and on his People in public.

He had the highest Esteem of the Persons, Principles and Spirit of the *first Fathers* of this Country, and of the *next Generation* descending from them---Was deeply affected with the late astonishing *Decays of vital Piety* and *Growth of Irreligion and Immorality*. And I hardly ever saw a Man who seem'd to bare them with such a *constant heavy Weight* upon his tender Heart ; that 'till the late Revival he cou'd scarce enjoy any Comfort. In the affecting Sense of those *Decays*, he was frequently keeping *Fasts* in his *Study, Family, Church, and Congregation*, and exciting others to do the like. And when just a sinking with Discouragement, he was hereby prepared to see the sudden Revival with the greater Surprize and Joy ; especially when it came on rushing, general and unexpected, about Nov. 23. 1741, on his own Church and Congregation. To see the Answer of so many Prayers come down at once on a People given over for lost ; it first threw him into Agonies of Transport, and then raised him to a vastly higher Pitch of Zeal and Activity than ever ; so that he scarce knew how to set any Bounds to his Labours, nor the People to beg them, both at Home and Abroad.

He was very affectionate and earnest in praying and preaching ; awakening & terrible to Sinners out of CHRIST ; searching to the self-deceived Hypocrite ; winning and importunate with Souls who found themselves undone, to come to the compassionate Saviour ; and exciting Believers to Gratitude, Love, Faith, Joy, a lively Obedience, and pressing after further Communion with God, and Conformity to him in Holiness. And he was noted for a free, bold and *faithful Reprover* to all Sorts ; which was the chief Thing that rais'd him Enemies : But herein he deliver'd his Soul, and was willing to run the Hazzard of losing their Friendship, and uttering bitter Reproaches for his faithful endeavouring the Deliverance of theirs. And I doubt not but he is now rejoycing in the glorious Fruits of his own Fidelity, and of their Unkindnesses.

(The Remainder in our next.)